

CB

STILL A FAVORITE ...AND WORTH TUNING IN

By Chuck Gysi (ex-KBZ-1055)

Citizens band radio has been around longer than scanners, but only scanners of the past decade or so can tune in CB communications. True, CB has had an illustrious past that was made notorious in the 1970s after gasoline prices shot through the roof. But today, you can find plenty to tune in on the 40 CB channels in any community in the United States and Canada, no matter how large or small.

CB was created in the 1940s as a short-range UHF radio service. However, in the late 1950s, the 11-meter amateur radio band at 27 MHz was taken away from hams and a new class of CB radio service was created. While the UHF CB service never caught on seriously, it was the 27-MHz version that found manufacturers willing to produce radios in the 1960s to make the radio service affordable for individuals and small businesses.

Today's CB is a far cry from CB of the past. While visions of Smokey and the Bandit conjure up images of "Breaker, breaker one-nine" and "Hey, good buddy," that's not all you'll hear on today's CB.

The citizens band radio of today that you will monitor is mature. It's gotten out of the

infantile stage of its birth in the 1950s through early 1970s and the teen years of the 1970s and into the early 1980s.

Today's CB is a useful radio service used by many for purposes that range from families keeping in touch to business type uses.

And if you listen carefully enough, you'll even hear clandestine communications on the band that was created for -- and eventually adopted by -- the masses.

Getting Started

It never has ceased to amaze me of the uses for CB radio. Personally, I got my



start more than three decades ago when I received a set of no-license 100-milliwatt walkie-talkies for Christmas. The Ross Electronics kiddie-talkies were equipped with transmit crystals for Channel 14 and there was a superheterodyne receiver that basically let me hear all the Cbers in the community on any given channel, even though all I needed to hear was Channel 14. I remember hearing the Cbers

CB FREQUENCIES

By CHUCK GYSI

Following are frequencies assigned to the citizens band radio service and the corresponding channel numbers. CBers usually refer to frequencies by their channels, however, some sideband operators may prefer to use the frequency.

Frequency (MHz)	Channel	27.125	14	27.285	28
26.965	1	27.135	15	27.295	29
26.975	2	27.155	16	27.305	30
26.985	3	27.165	17	27.315	31
27.005	4	27.175	18	27.325	32
27.015	5	27.185	19	27.335	33
27.025	6	27.205	20	27.345	34
27.035	7	27.215	21	27.355	35
27.055	8	27.225	22	27.365	36
27.065	9	27.235	24	27.375	37
27.075	10	27.245	25	27.385	38
27.085	11	27.255	23	27.395	39
27.105	12	27.265	26	27.405	40
27.115	13	27.275	27		

Note: Channel numbers are not in order from 27.235 through 27.265 MHz. This is because CB channels 24 through 40 were added in the late 1970s to the original 23 channels. Channels 24 and 25 were situated between Channels 22 and 23. Also, in-between frequencies not seemingly in use, such as 26.995, 27.045, 27.095, 27.145 and 27.195 are used for radio-control purposes, especially for remote-control toys.

Business band channels at 27 MHz

Try these business radio service channels at 27 MHz, too, for possible action. Very few businesses use these frequencies now, but you still may find a few active, especially when there is skip. Most users operate in the AM mode. 27.430 27.450 27.470 27.490 Itinerant use 27.510

saying "Breaker" all the time and thought my sister and I were interfering, or "breaking up" their conversations as we chatted about the house and neighborhood.

I still have one of those walkie-talkies to date and even though it got left in the car one day and melted the thing crooked, it still amazingly works! I later graduated to a two-channel professional - looking 100-milliwatt CB walkie-talkie that I used to communicate within the neighborhood to my junior-high school pals, who had full-power 5-watt CB base stations in their homes. It wasn't long before I saw that I needed to move up, too, and I found plenty of uses for my CB

rigs (Lafayette Comstat 19 for starters) to help out my community. I assisted fire police officers who used CB for responding to fire calls and directing traffic at the scene. By monitoring fire calls and transmitting the locations to the fire police on CB Channel 11, I aided in their effort. It was one of many public service uses I found for my radios as a CBer.

The CB Service Today

Today's CB has new - found methods of good usage for an old radio service. And it's for good reason. CB handheld radios have taken on a new look.

In as much as other radios and cell phones have become miniaturized, so have CB

walkie-talkies. With a CB radio that fits in the palm of your hand, you can have full-power communications on 40 channels and a flexible rubber-duck antenna.

Earlier CB handheld radios often were larger than bricks, about as heavy with the batteries included and had whip antennas that would scrape the paint off ceilings and bump into everything you walked near.

In fact, because of how great some of these new CB rigs look today, some people have given up on expensive cellular phones and switched to CB rigs for keeping in touch with family and friends. If you don't want to draw attention to the CB rig in your car, there's

no need to worry, too. There are mobile CB antennas today that look like cellular pigtail antennas.

Imagine yacking away on CB from your car, and everyone on the road will just think you're another cellular user. No need to worry that CB would lower your status in the world!

Fairs and Festivals

Because the cost of CB radios has held somewhat steady with the cost of living over the years, many groups find that CB is a very viable communications medium to serve their purposes.

It's not unusual to find CB handhelds in use in places such as fairs and festivals. In fact, the CB walkie-talkies being used for such purposes may have been purchased years ago and because they get used only for a few days every year, they just keep using the rigs. As long as the radios work for their purposes, there's no need for a fair or festival to purchase new radios. And with less goofing-off on CB channels all the time, there's typically minimal interference that would cause a fair or festival to want to get rid of the radios.

Most fairs and festivals use CB radios to coordinate parking operations, for security and some rides and concessions. It's not unusual to see parking attendants or security guards carrying around CB walkie-talkies on fairgrounds with their long whip antennas. You can hear the nerve of fair and festival operations if you can figure out what channel is being used for the operations. (See sidebar.)

Watching Your Neighborhood

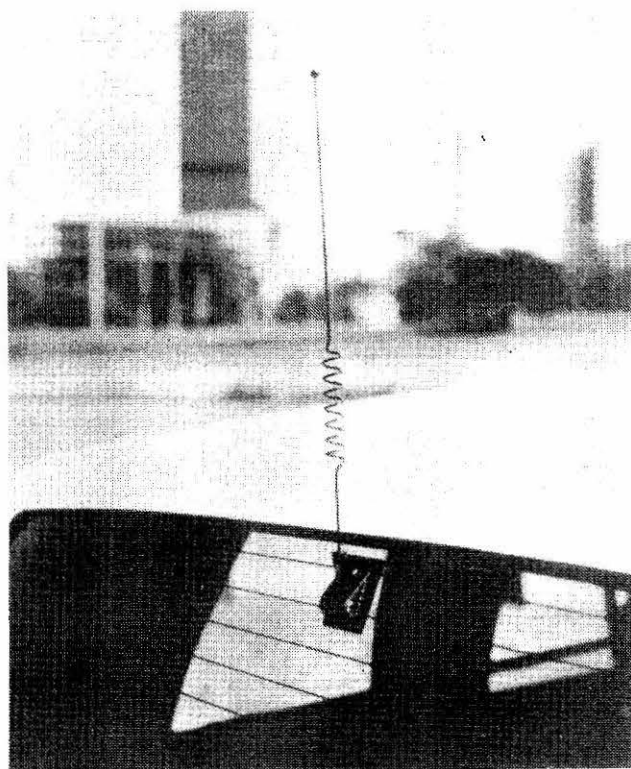
CB radio has long been a staple of town watch units. These citizens patrol their

neighborhoods and report suspicious activity to police. In many towns, town watch units use CB radios to call neighborhood captains with their reports for relay to police headquarters. By monitoring these patrols, you'll have an idea what's going on in your community even before police are notified.

CB has long proven to be popular with town watch organizations because the range of CB is excellent for neighborhood-type communications, even in skip conditions, the equipment costs fit any group's budget and many members already may have CB radios, thus saving the group even more money.

On the Water

While not as many boaters use CB radio as have in the past, there still are those on lakes, rivers and oceans that are using CB to augment their VHF marine radios. At one time, the U.S. Coast Guard actually monitored Channel 9 for distress and emergency calls from boaters because of the popularity of CB, however,



The 9-foot long mobile CB antennas of the past used to make cars look like tuna-fishing boats but no more. This antenna looks like a cellular antenna but actually is used for CB. It makes CBing tidy for today's users.

you'd be hard pressed to find a local Coast Guard group that still is tuned to 27.065 MHz. Some boaters find that CB offers a discreet method of contacting others, especially fishermen. Instead of putting out the location of good fishing locations on VHF marine, thus attracting more fishermen than you want around you, the word sometimes is put out on CB and only those boats with CB will even have a clue as to what is going on.

Taking a Fall

One of the most unique uses of CB I've seen in recent years is for parachuting. A skydiving group uses CB to send instructions to skydivers

falling from the sky. At the drop zone, the instructor would use a CB walkie-talkie to call out information to those who just dropped out of the airplane. The skydivers had CB receivers strapped on and could hear their coach on the ground as he called for them to open their parachutes or adjust their direction as they fell. It always was interesting to hear the instructor call out his instructions to the novice skydivers.

An Alternative

Families have discovered that CB offers a low-cost alternative to high-cost cellular phone bills. Too often, the family that has several cell phones sees the cost skyrocket each month they use the phones. However, CB has been touted as a low-cost alternative, especially when short-range use works. Too often, convoys of friends or families on the highway are using CB as a short-range method of communicating with each of the cars in the traveling party. If you listen to Channel 19 long enough, you'll notice that in addition to traveling bands of truckers, you'll hear four-wheelers in there, too, keeping up with each other on the highway.

Chatting Away

There are the hobbyists out there who use CB just for chatting, in as much as hams do. Surely, you have tuned in to your local 2-meter or 440-MHz repeater and listened to amateur radio operators chatting away during their commute or performing community service. Well,

you'll hear much of the same thing on CB. You'll find the same type of chatting on CB channels. Most CBers have a channel they frequent and check in on. You'll get to know some of the operators in your neighborhood by tuning around the various CB channels.

Bears on the Air

Don't forget that many police cars are equipped with CB radios. Most of these police officers will be monitoring Channel 9 or 19, and typically will respond to calls for help if they are within range. You'll find police in small towns, suburban communities and state police monitoring CB channels. Most of the time, the radios will be turned down, or the squelch cracked far up to avoid hearing all the static, but they're still out there. Don't be surprised to find police using CB as a chatter channel, too. For instance, if

you hear a police officer telling another on their VHF or UHF radio to switch to Channel 30, you can bet that Channel 30 isn't on their two-way radio. If you quickly tune in 27.305 MHz, you're likely to hear the cop chatter there.

Guard Watch

Some security details can be found using CB radio, too. For close-in communications at a given site, CB radio often will allow security guards to offer perimeter coverage and communication with fellow guards on site. At one time, CB was popular with security guards. I once purchased at auction a CB walkie-talkie that was carried around a hospital by security guards keeping in touch with the switchboard operator. I'm sure the whip antenna poked a few people or scraped a few walls along the way!



CB Radio is America's most popular radio service. Millions of people are on the air every day!